1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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APPENDIX I

SOCIAL CHANGE IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

Since the historian of Murngin society must depend almost entirely on indirect induction to obtain any knowledge of this people's past, any conclusions reached are likely to be tentative and usually not specific but general in their dating and statement of relationships. The Murngin do not possess organized migration myths, although there are accounts of the movements of clan ancestors, particularly during the stress of early disasters. The writer is in whole-hearted agreement with Lowie when he says: "My position, then, towards oral tradition, may be summarized as follows: It is not based, in the first instance, on a universal negative unjustifiably derived from a necessarily limited number of instances, but on the conviction that aboriginal history is only a part of that hodgepodge of aboriginal lore which embraces primitive theories of the universe generally, and that its *a priori* claims to greater respect on our part are nil. Such claims must be established empirically, if at all; but, so far as my experience extends, the empirical facts are diametrically opposed to such claims."[1] I have therefore placed no historical value on these myths or oral traditions concerning the early movements of the Murngin's ancestors but have seen them as rationalizations. I have looked upon the movements of the clan ancestors as Murngin rationalizations, in a logic of time relations, for their present spatial relationships of antagonism and friendship for certain clans and tribes in their local organization.

The following materials and methods have been used to reconstruct Murngin history:

I. Observations of present culture change, e.g., the intrusion of certain rituals such as the Gunabibi and of certain customs such as subincision.

II. Documents of earlier explorers.

III. The culture area method, by which essentially spatial facts are given an interpretation in time. This method, combined with the evidence of archaeological finds, has been used in reconstructing the possible history of Murngin modes of disposing of the dead.

IV. The archaeological method, to determine the length of time certain articles of technology have been possessed by the Murngin.

[1] Lowie, Robert H., "Oral Tradition and History"; address of the retiring president, delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society in New York, December 27, 1916.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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121 V. Application of the Douglass tree-ring method.[2] This was attempted
● 127 unsuccessfully in an effort to date more exactly Malay intrusion into North Australia by examining the growth rings of the tamarind trees which were brought to the shores of the Arafura and the Gulf of Carpentaria by the Malay traders.

OBSERVATION OF CERTAIN HISTORICAL PROCESSES

177 The Gunabibi is not found in any of the clans around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays or among the island peoples of the northeast; but large
852 numbers of the men from these districts go south to the clans that have this ceremony and participate there. Certain features of the Gunabibi are not observed by these northern visitors, particularly the exchange of wives since they do not bring their wives with them. The Gunabibi is thought of as a southern and western ceremony. Leaders from the Rainbarngo come to the Goyder River country to assist in its direction. The Liaalaomir and surrounding clans, however, have it as an organized part of their ceremonial life. The process of diffusion, as it is observable in this case, has two elements in it: (1) the clans on the edges of its distribution tend to assimilate it, and (2) the clans farther away tend to accept it in that their men go to its celebrations, which means that a large group of men are Gunabibi initiates in areas where it is not a part of the total clan behavior. Because of its distribution among the more remote northern clans and simultaneous contacts with the general distribution of the Gunabibi, this rite is diffusing very rapidly and promises to cover the whole of the Murngin area within the next few years.

The rapidity of its diffusion is aided by the operation of a cultural selective factor: the ceremony itself is but a slight variation of the Djungguan and is dependent on the same Wawilak myth for its logic. It also emphasizes with greater clarity and satisfaction the ideas of fertility latent or explicit in all the large Murngin rituals; this would tend to make it attractive and exciting to their thinking and emotions and make them see it as "more inside" (that is, the further inside the men's ceremonial grounds one goes, the more sacred the mysteries become).

177 In the Roper River area the Gunabibi is associated with subincision but
852 in the northern Murngin area it is not. Subincision is diffusing into this
304 area as a part of the general complex but is not a ritual element; and it is treated by the people who accept it as a separate custom, although they know that it is a part of the general Gunabibi configuration in the south. It seems probable that, in no great length of time, the two will be reassociated because the subincision songs are sung at the present time in the

[2] Douglass, Andrew E., "Dating Our Prehistoric Ruins; How Growth Rings in Timbers Aid in Establishing the Relative Ages of the Ruined Pueblos of the Southwest," *Natural History*, 1921, Vol. XVI, pages 27-30.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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FOREWORD

This book was planned to throw additional light on a little-known country – Arnhem Land, in the north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory of Australia. /2/

We are concerned principally with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the coastal areas, and with the different forms of alien contact to which they have been subjected from the past up to the present day. Our intention has been to place in perspective the historical sequence of conditions in this region, relating these to the life and thought of the indigenous population.

We see the world of the Arnhem Landers gradually widening through the years, from the period when the coast was visited by what we now term Ancestral and Spirit Beings to the time of the pre-Macassans, followed by the Indonesians, Europeans and Japanese. It is a panoramic conception; for no other Aboriginal group in Australia has been subjected to such varied, and at times intensive, cultural impact as have these Arnhem Landers. The most remarkable result has been their ability to maintain throughout this intercourse so much of their cultural and moral integrity.

The greater part of this book has been compiled from data obtained during our own anthropological field research in Arnhem Land; these were supplemented by documentary material from official and unofficial European sources. Thus we may see the point of view of the Aborigines on the one hand, and of the alien "intruders" on the other. /27/

We have purposely not included a detailed account of the indigenous native society and culture, because to do this satisfactorily would involve a far more elaborate discussion than is possible here. The reader particularly interested in this aspect will find a brief description of the cultural background, and something of the traditional life of the Arnhem Landers, in Chapter 2: /2/